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Leland Urges Lifting Cuba Embargo ;
Normalization : Start Lifting Cuba Embargo,
Leland Urges -Houston Chronicle ; Leland Favors
Normalization of Cuba Relations - Houston Post
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The Mickey Leland Papers & Collection Addendum. (Texas Southern University, 2015)

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Start lifting Cuba embargo, Leland urges

BY CRAGG HINES
Chronicle Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The United States should start to lift its trade embargo against Cuba, beginning with medicine, Rep. Mickey Leland, D-Houston, believes after a four-day trip to the communist Caribbean nation.

"I feel Congress needs to do something as a matter of humanity," said Leland, apparently the first major Texas elected official to visit Cuba since the revolution that put Marxist Fidel Castro, with whom Leland visited privately for about 40 minutes, in power in 1959.

Leland chided the embargo "hypocritical" because the United States, while denying trade to Cuba, broadens its trade relations daily with the Soviet Union, Cuba's political-economic underwriter. He also said that U.S. firms are circumvent-

ing the embargo by dealing with Cuba through Canadian intermediaries.

Leland said he had also learned since returning from Cuba last week that some of his political financial backers were upset by his trip. But he laughed off their concern without identifying them by saying they were businessmen who would benefit by lifting of trade restrictions.

The Houston representative said he will work in Congress to begin lifting the sanctions but is not sure what form his effort will take. Leland is on the House health subcommittee, but questions on international embargoes would normally be handled by foreign relations committees.

Leland said he suggested that as "an act of faith, as part of an overture" to the United States, that Cuba release one of four CIA agents it has in jail.

But Leland reported that Castro said "adamantly" that "that is a point that is not negotiable with me."

The CIA agents were taken prisoner in the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion. Castro said they will be held until the United States releases the Puerto Rican nationalists who are in jail in the United States for opening fire on the U.S. House in 1954.

As an alternative, Leland asked Castro to consider allowing nine Cubans who have relatives in his Houston district to come to the United States. Leland said the list was suggested to him by the relatives who are his constituents.

Leland said Castro could not promise all would be allowed to leave Cuba but indicated that some would be.

Leland's invitation to visit Cuba came from the Cuban Interest Section in Washington, the branch of the Czechoslovakian embassy that handles Cuban matters in Washington, after officials there had read of Leland's role in founding a black-Hispanic caucus.

And although Leland found "almost total (racial) integration of society" in Cuba, there was nothing he saw "really relevant to our struggle here."

"Their society proves blacks and Hispanics can get together and live in harmony," but the economic differences of the two nations are so different that there is little U.S. blacks and Hispanics can learn from the Cuban experience, he said.

Leland and seven aides and friends visited Cuba over the Memorial Day weekend, paying their own way, including \$50 a day in Havana for meals and lodg-

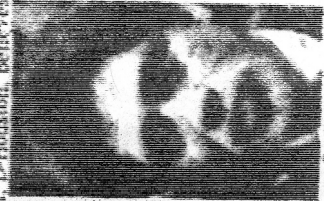
ing. "From what I saw, I think they are doing a decent job of providing for the basics of life," Leland said.

He said he asked repeatedly why Cuba is so tied to the Soviet Union, and was told again and again that Cuba could not get help anywhere else after the United States imposed the trade embargo.

"I had the feeling they were almost pleading for us to open relations again," Leland said, so he brought up the Cuban troops in Africa, which has been the major reason U.S.-Cuban relations have not improved.

Leland said he was told Cuban troops were there by invitation. He also said he was told repeatedly that Cuban aid was more than military. In Ethiopia, for instance, he said he was told that Cuba had sent in more doctors than previously were in the country.

The former U.S. presence in Vietnam, which formerly had been cited by Cuba when it was questioned about its military policy, was not mentioned, Leland said. An allusion to U.S. support for Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza was the strongest retort he got. Leland noted: "They were very diplomatic."



Houston
Post 6/5/79

Leland favors normalization of Cuba relations

By JIM CRAIG
Post Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Rep. Mickey Leland, the Houston liberal Democrat who returned last week from a four-day visit in Cuba, believes the United States should normalize its relations with the island country 90 miles from Florida.

He said Monday he will introduce a resolution in the House this week calling on the United States to lift its sanction prohibiting U.S. citizens and organizations from sending medicine to Cuba.

"They're begging for relations between North America and Cuba," Leland said of officials with whom he talked, including President Fidel Castro.

He said medicine, food and clothing are rationed due to the economic boycott imposed by the United States.

"Medicine should not be used as a political tool to wage war against anybody," he said in an interview.

Leland made an unofficial trip to Cuba as the leader of a delegation sent through the Cuban Interest Section, which is in Washington that maintains loose-ties with the United States.

He made the trip on a private jet paid for by Frisco Airlines, owner of Houston's City magazine, who accompanied Leland. An aide to Leland, a photographer and writer for the magazine, and Bill Smith, administrator of Hermann Hospital, also went on the trip.

While Leland paid for the air fare, Leland said he

and the others paid their own way, food per day for food and lodging.

While his presence in Cuba was an official, government-sponsored visit, he said he was received as a congressman.

He met with the mayor of Havana and other governmental officials, and talked privately with Castro for 30 minutes.

"Cuba is suffering tremendously from the embargo by this country," he said. The most nation's agriculture program is failing and in need of technical assistance, he said.

While he was uncertain of his feelings on normalizing relations between the United States and Cuba before the trip, he now is convinced the countries should review their official relationship.



Rep. Mickey Leland, Democrat of Texas

■ Pig sty

Referring to the article on Rep. Mickey Leland (Post June 5) . . . about normalizing relations with Cuba:

Let Russia give them the medicine, food and clothing they need. It is **NOT** the U.S. using these things as a political tool but just the opposite. Russia, knowing the

world power the U.S. has and knowing also at this time we cannot afford to "lose face," will let (no, almost hintingly insist) the U.S. supply these things to Cuba, while at the same time stockpiling Cuba with their military and rocket bases to be used against the U.S.

We have hungry, sick people here in the U.S. of all races and colors who could use help from the government (with our money) one hell of a lot more than some communist country.

If Mr. Leland feels so for these people I suggest that he also pay a visit to my (once-beautiful) home city and state of Miami, Fla., to see what a pig sty they have made of it. It is now known as "Little Havana."

As a representative in the United States of **FREE** America, perhaps Mr. Leland should stick to the job the free citizens of the U.S. elected him for and let the Reds feed their own.

Sherry Jurak

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